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Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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AGENDA ITEM 99: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/49/12 and Add.1, A/49/218-S/1994/801, A/49/287 and Corr.1, 380, 533, 534, 577 and Corr.1, 578; A/C.3/49/12)

1. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that in the past year, the number of refugees and internally displaced and other persons of concern to UNHCR had exceeded 27 million, confronting the Office with the dual challenge of massive emergencies as well as large-scale repatriation operations. UNHCR had had to respond to several successive emergencies in the Great Lakes region of Africa, which had produced over 2 million refugees. In the former Yugoslavia, the Office had continued its humanitarian activities on behalf of some 4 million refugees, internally displaced persons and besieged civilians. In Haiti, Central America and South Asia, there had been progress towards solutions, but Eastern Europe and Central Asia remained regions beset by coerced population movements.

2. Strengthening the Office's emergency preparedness and response capacity had been a priority. The scale and speed of the outflow of almost 1 million refugees from Rwanda into Zaire in the space of one week in July had been overwhelming. It had been necessary to devise innovative emergency assistance "packages", using donor government personnel and facilities. Based on its experience in the former Yugoslavia and Zaire, UNHCR was now actively considering limited use of military support, while maintaining civilian control and the multinational character of its humanitarian cperations.

3. Although providing relief to victims was often the first response, the essence of the humanitarian challenge lay in protection. Brutal conflicts and blatant violations of humanitarian law, the militarization of refugee situations and the erosion of States' capacities to provide security complicated the protection of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Overcrowded camps and the free flow of arms aggravated the situation. Refugee women and children were most at risk. The international protection provided by the Office focused increasingly on promoting physical security. It sought to establish an early and massive presence in the field, decongest camps, introduce special security measures for refugee women and train and assist government officials. The Office, however, could not take upon itself the responsibility of Governments to enforce laws and deal with armed gangs, former soldiers and militia members who threatened the refugees.

4. She was deeply concerned about the lack of security in the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, where the military and militia of the former Rwandan regime were endangering the lives of refugees and humanitarian workers, disrupting the delivery of relief and essential services and obstructing voluntary repatriation. At a meeting chaired by the Secretary-General the previous day, it had been agreed that top priority would be given to that issue and that

concrete steps would be worked out involving international police and/or military deployment to be proposed to the Security Council. While she was encouraged by recent developments to provide temporary protection in situations of large-scale influx of refugees, she was disturbed at the growing reluctance of many States to keep their borders open. In the face of persecution, war and violence, it was necessary to uphold the institution of asylum, at least on a temporary basis.

5. The ultimate objective of international protection of refugees was to gain time to find solutions to refugee problems. Voluntary repatriation, wherever possible, was the ideal solution. The search for humanitarian solutions to refugee problems depended greatly on political initiatives and sustained political commitment. Providing protection also presented the most difficult dilemma in repatriation operations. Too often refugees were returning to situations of acute crisis, if not open conflict, as in Liberia, Somalia and Afghanistan. The Office therefore was emphasizing the need to create an environment of confidence and security in Rwanda. The recent signing of the tripartite agreement between the Governments of Rwanda and Zaire with UNHCR was an important first step in that direction.

6. As the situations in Cambodia and El Salvador had shown, a greater operational human rights role by the United Nations could be a valuable confidence-building measure in post-conflict situations and also have a preventive impact. Accordingly, she urged the international community to support UNHCR efforts to deploy human rights monitors in Rwanda. She also welcomed the human rights verification mission to Guatemala and hoped that all parties would cooperate so that a solution could be found for the Guatemalan refugees and displaced persons.

7. Since the promotion of human rights was of vital importance to the Office's work, it had sought to increase its cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms and share relevant experience and expertise with the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the task of UNHCR was to assist victims. Its role was humanitarian, not judgemental. Solutions to the refugee problem required a greater emphasis not only on human rights, but also on economic security. Efforts could be meaningful only if they were placed in the larger framework of national rehabilitation, economic and social development and democratization of war-torn societies. The international community must show a greater commitment to post-conflict rehabilitation. She was disappointed at the lack of interest by the international community in consolidating efforts in Tajikistan, although the operation had been hailed as a rare success for the United Nations integrated approach. The socio-economic causes of displacement must be recognized and addressed energetically. It was hoped that the World Summit for Social Development would help focus attention on the links between social disintegration and human displacement and mobilize greater support for a preventive and solution-oriented strategy to deal with refugee problems.

8. The situation in the Community of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States represented perhaps the greatest challenge for a regional approach in

preventing and resolving those problems. The Office was actively considering the possibility of convening an international conference in 1995 to devise a comprehensive strategy to address population movements in that region. The success of that process, however, would depend on the commitment of the Governments concerned and the contributions by the international community.

9. Although the human suffering in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained horrendous, the activities of UNHCR, UNPROFOR and other organizations had helped to save lives and contain a humanitarian crisis that threatened the stability of Europe. The future, however, was highly unpredictable in view of the continuing displacement of people, the obstruction of humanitarian access, worsening security and the onset of a third winter of war. She urged Governments to respond generously to the Office's financial needs for 1994 and to the appeal for humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia for the first half of 1995.

10. The volatile situations that had endangered the protection of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons had also affected the safety of UNHCR and other humanitarian staff. She expressed appreciation to the delegations that had supported the initiative of making a draft convention on the safety and security of United Nations staff and associated personnel applicable to humanitarian staff, who were in the same danger as the peace-keepers, but were less protected, although their tasks were equally meritorious.

11. In confronting the challenges facing it, UNHCR had sought to intensify its traditional cooperation with sister United Nations agencies as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations. At the same time, it had forged new partnerships in the political and military arenas both within the United Nations and with regional organizations and entities. Since the refugee problem affected international peace, stability and economic progress, a symbiotic relationship was developing between the political initiatives and developmental activities of the United Nations and its humanitarian action. Nevertheless, the non-political and impartial nature of the Office's mandate must be preserved and perceived as such by all. That was essential to the credibility of its humanitarian work and its ability to protect human beings and find solutions to their problems.

12. As political, military and humanitarian mandates interacted in multifaceted United Nations operations, all actors must understand and respect each other's roles and responsibilities. A clear structure and division of labour must be established at an early stage in such operations. The Emergency Relief Coordinator should act rapidly in consultation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to assign responsibilities in complex emergencies. By protecting and assisting individuals in an impartial manner, the Office enhanced human welfare, helped to reduce tensions and promoted reconciliation. UNHCR needed the political and moral support of Member States to maintain its unique humanitarian mandate and required their generous financial support to sustain its programmes. Lastly, she stressed the need to develop a bold plan of action to meet the new challenges confronting the Organization.

13. Mr. Borg OLIVIER (Department of Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on emergency international assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan (A/49/380), said that the cease-fire in effect since May 1994 in Nagorny Karabakh had been reinforced by an agreement signed by all parties in July 1994. The deployment of peace-keeping troops or monitors was under consideration and there was widespread hope that the conflict would be resolved. Nevertheless, the political environment in the region remained fragile and tense. The economic and social situation in Azerbaijan and throughout the Caucasus region had continued to deteriorate rapidly in the past year. Conditions were very difficult for large numbers of people, particularly those displaced by the conflict. Unemployment was rising because of severe reductions in industrial output and agricultural production was steadily falling. The number of refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan was just under 900,000. The Government had reiterated its request to bring to the attention of donors the assistance needs of the population affected. Citing its inability to cope with the emergency, it expressed particular concern about the coming winter, which promised to be very difficult.

14. The report in document A/49/380 provided detailed information on the extent of the problems in all sectors. In view of their magnitude and the large number of persons concerned, much remained to be done. The report also provided information on activities carried out by the humanitarian community as well as bilateral activities by Member States. While continuing to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable groups, the humanitarian community should move towards longer-term projects to promote self-sufficiency. The Government of Azerbaijan must take the necessary steps, together with the relevant regional and international organizations, to address the root causes of the problems. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was initiating the process of preparing the next consolidated inter-agency appeal for the Caucasus region, to be launched in early 1995. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in Azerbaijan, the Department would play a leading role in ensuring that the United Nations system responded in an appropriate manner and that the next appeal clearly reflected the transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development while targeting relief assistance to those who needed it the most. The success of those efforts would depend entirely on effective international support.

15. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the new international humanitarian order (A/49/577), he said that in pursuance of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the question since 1981, the Secretary-General had been regularly transmitting to the Assembly views or information from Governments and organizations on questions relating to their respective humanitarian concerns. In reviewing the question of a new humanitarian order, as called for under General Assembly resolution 47/106, the Secretary-General wished to draw the attention of Governments to recent important efforts made by the United Nations to respond more effectively to challenges posed by the increasing number and complexity of humanitarian emergencies and to promoting respect for human rights.

16. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, supported by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, worked closely with the operational agencies of the United Nations and Governments in facilitating a timely and comprehensive response to humanitarian crises around the world. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, more systematic efforts had been initiated to advance the role of the United Nations to serve as an advocate for humanitarian principles. Efforts had also been made to strengthen public understanding of, and support for, humanitarian assistance activities, including promoting respect for the principles and rules of international humanitarian law. The replies received from Governments, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and other organizations were contained in the annex to the report.

17. Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) commended the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff on their commitment to the cause of refugees, displaced persons and migrants, paying tribute to those who had lost their lives in the discharge of their duties.

18. Among the notable achievements of UNHCR, she drew attention to the repatriation operation in Cambodia as well as activities under the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. The Philippines supported the concept of the voluntary repatriation of refugees, in dignified and safe conditions as well as efforts to integrate them in their countries of origin. With regard to Vietnamese refugees in the Philippines, while their repatriation was a triumph of international goodwill, her delegation would appreciate the assistance of the countries concerned in the task of their orderly resettlement.

19. Despite the progress made much work still needed to be done. For as long as ethnic conflicts, civil strife, military confrontation, human rights violations and natural and man-made disasters occurred, the problem of refugees and displaced persons would not disappear. The number of refugees and displaced persons was now greater than ever before and the High Commissioner should not be left to shoulder that burden alone; it was the responsibility of the international community to continue its search for a sustainable and durable solution. Her delegation had supported General Assembly resolution 48/113 on the convening of the United Nations conference for the comprehensive consideration and review of the problems of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants. It also concurred with the majority of countries who, in response to a UNHCR request to submit their views on the conference, had underscored the need for a comprehensive regional and/or global approach based on international cooperation and solidarity. For although regional conferences were useful in addressing specific problems at the regional level, a plan of action of general applicability was required.

20. Her delegation associated itself with efforts to ensure that the needs of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants, including migrant workers were part of a policy of sustained human development. Her delegation would also support initiatives to protect the rights of such persons, particularly women and children, the most vulnerable among them. UNHCR must continue to coordinate and cooperate with the organizations dealing with humanitarian law, human rights and migration, including the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Such cooperation and the support of member States, NGOs and the various United Nations human rights bodies would galvanize global efforts to ensure the protection and restore the hope of the millions of people who had lost their homes, families, countries and people.

21. Mr. Kwang Jae LEE (Republic of Korea) paid tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff, particularly the UNHCR field officers, for their dedication and courageous efforts in the face of difficult challenges over the last year and pledged his delegation's support for UNHCR activities. The refugee situation had deteriorated world wide, with an increase in the number of refugees due to continued political and ethnic violence resulting in human tragedies such as that in Rwanda. The international community must now share the responsibility for such events and adopt a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of flight and meet the needs of refugees. It must reflect upon the effects of the existing world economic and humanitarian order with a view to redressing imbalances, and should recognize the importance of UNHCR as the leading relief and assistance agency in the context of global security.

22. The international community had failed to meet the special needs of women and children, who now constituted 80 per cent of the world's refugees. Further efforts must be made to protect them, particularly against violence, and to provide them with proper humanitarian assistance. His delegation welcomed the UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children and looked forward to concrete action plans in that connection. The participation of women refugees in planning and implementing humanitarian assistance should be encouraged and related issues should be taken up during the preparatory meetings for the World Summit for Social Development as well as the Fourth World Conference on Women.

23. In order to forestall any further exodus of internally displaced persons which would threaten global security, the international community should support UNHCR initiatives such as the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force on internally displaced persons. Moreover, while the responsibility for such persons belonged to the Governments of their countries of origin, efforts should be made to draw the latter into a framework of international cooperation for preventive and containment strategies.

24. The human rights aspect of the refugee situation caused grave concern and the Republic of Korea would welcome the establishment of a monitoring system to prevent all forms of maltreatment and human rights violations among refugees and internally displaced persons.

25. A further matter of concern was asylum: the international community must not allow changing realities to lead to greater restrictions on the right of asylum, and should uphold the principles enshrined in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The problem of developing countries and especially the least developed countries in coping with most of the world's refugees also had to be addressed. Each nation bore a share of responsibility and should assist UNHCR through, inter alia, increasing its voluntary financial contributions. His

Government had decided to give its financial support to the assistance programme for Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh and increase its contribution to UNHCR in future.

26. The seemingly insurmountable problem of refugees could be overcome through cooperation and partnership, as borne out by progress made in recent years as a result of greater coordination between UNHCR and relevant government, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Successful joint projects for refugees included repatriation programmes for the citizens of Mozambique, Cambodia and Myanmar. The UNHCR strategy for prevention, preparedness and solutions had also improved due to institution-building and training endeavours in countries at risk as well as its work in the broader context of peace-building and peace-making operations under, inter alia, General Assembly resolution 48/57. Further coordination between UNHCR and United Nations development programmes and organizations concerned with peace-keeping operations were the key to finding a durable solution to the refugee problem.

27. He welcomed the political and structural changes in UNHCR aimed at improving its relations with NGOs, which played a vital role in providing humanitarian assistance for refugees - "Partnership in Action" was an exemplary model of cooperation. In conclusion he paid tribute to the relief personnel who risked their lives to bring humanitarian assistance to those in need, stressing the importance of ensuring their safety through appropriate legal and other measures for their protection.

28. Mr. WANG Min (China) said that although the international community had achieved considerable progress during the past year in addressing refugee problems in certain areas, many current situations in other parts of the world remained virtually unchanged, and the total numbers of concern to the High Commissioner had increased from 19 million to 23 million. Dealing with that situation, and preventing the emergence of additional refugees, was a serious challenge for the international community. Only a clear understanding of the root causes of the refugee issue could lead to an effective solution. In addition to foreign aggression and intervention, territorial disputes, internal ethnic or religious conflict, extreme economic deterioration, and natural disasters, economic sanctions and embargoes should not be overlooked as causes of refugee problems. To eliminate those root causes, a more just world-wide political and economic order should be established on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. His Government had consistently advocated simultaneous efforts to eliminate the root causes and to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance.

29. Existing international agreements had had a positive impact on the provision of protection to refugees over the years; however, with the passage of time, they had revealed their limitations. UNHCR had introduced many internal standards and developed new norms, and regional instruments had appropriately enlarged the definition of refugees in accordance with local situations. His Government supported current efforts to explore ways to perfect that definition, to improve the refugee protection system, and to formulate new guidelines for the work of UNHCR. Solving the refugee problem called for joint efforts by

countries of asylum, of resettlement, of origin, and donor countries. The Rwandan refugee crisis had been mitigated by the international community's swift response; that showed the particular importance of close cooperation and burden-sharing.

30. The non-political and humanitarian character of UNHCR had been a sure guarantee for the smooth conduct of its activities, as was seen in the forty-fifth report of the Executive Committee. He hoped that UNHCR would continue to adhere to that principle as well as the Charter of the United Nations and its own mandate.

31. He appealed to the international community not to neglect the needs of existing refugees while addressing the needs of new refugees. Assistance to the host countries of existing refugees should be continued in order to help them develop their economies, for economic development would be crucial to the successful settlement of refugees and to the prevention of irregular migratory flows. China would continue to play its part in common efforts to address the world's refugee problems.

32. Mr. DUCARM (Romania) expressed appreciation of the work performed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and staff in particularly difficult circumstances, thus building confidence in the Offices' future activities. Romania had become a host or transit country in recent years for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, while the number of Romanian citizens leaving the country had decreased significantly due to national, political and economic reforms as well as more rigorous immigration policies in Western countries, and there had been virtually no illegal immigrants in Romania prior to 1989, approximately 48,000 people had entered the country between 1991 and 1992 with temporary visas and had not left after their visas had run out. Applications for asylum had also risen significantly. Whereas most asylum-seekers had been Albanians and Somalis in 1992, in 1993 many had come from Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa. However, most illegal immigrants in Romania were not seeking asylum, they were merely using Romania as a transit country.

33. The Romanian authorities had given priority to establishing an appropriate legal and institutional framework in order to cope with the influx of refugees and migrants. In 1991 Romania had become a party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol on Refugees. New legislation on the status of refugees in Romania was currently before Parliament; pending its passage the Government had issued relevant temporary legislation. An inter-ministerial body had also been set up to ensure implementation of relevant government decisions and coordination of bilateral and multilateral programmes. UNHCR and IOM had also established liaison offices in Bucharest and had already provided humanitarian and financial assistance.

34. Moreover, a number of bilateral agreements had been signed in recent years for the repatriation of illegal Romanian immigrants in other countries. Some of them included provisions relating to the return of third country nationals who had used Romania as a transit country. At the same time, special programmes for

the social, economic and professional reintegration of returnees had been developed, occasionally with foreign assistance. The efforts to accredit Romania as a "safe country of origin" and "safe third country" should liberalize visa requirements for Romanian citizens and, in a broader sense, facilitate the establishment of a legal framework for the freer flow of persons between Romania and other countries.

35. Addressing the refugee problem on a global level was an extremely complex task and must encompass all political, economic and social aspects. Furthermore, there must be a balanced approach between short- and long-term objectives and efforts must be accelerated to protect existing refugees and displaced persons and to seek durable solutions.

36. As highlighted at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the root causes of the refugee phenomenon must be dealt with, and its close links with the issues of security, democracy, human rights and economic and social development must be recognized. Governments should be aware of that interrelationship and should promote peace and reconciliation as well as respect for the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States.

37. At the international level increased emphasis should be laid, inter alia, on creating an appropriate security framework, preventive diplomacy and the promotion of free trade and foreign investment. While he appreciated UNHCR efforts to increase cooperation with United Nations human rights bodies, he stressed the need for a permanent dialogue between the Office and other international organizations concerned. Furthermore, greater attention should be paid to the protection of and assistance to existing refugees and displaced persons through universal accession and full implementation of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol as well as the creation of appropriate institutional mechanisms at the national level.

38. The efforts by migrants to find loopholes in the relevant international instruments and domestic legislation pointed to the need for a clearer differentiation between genuine refugees and other categories of migrants or asylum seekers. The organizations concerned should cooperate with UNHCR in its endeavours to lighten the burden borne by countries that had given shelter to large numbers of refugees; moreover, specific refugee-related measures at regional and subregional levels should take into account the difficulties experienced by countries with economies in transition and provide appropriate assistance. Positive action to cope with the refugee problem should include voluntary repatriation, integration in a country of asylum or resettlement in a third country.

39. His delegation welcomed UNHCR efforts on behalf of voluntary repatriation, where possible, and agreed on the need for financial and logistic assistance by the parties concerned and the international community. Special attention should also be paid to transit countries and greater communication and cooperation among the countries concerned was required to find appropriate solutions. In conclusion, he emphasized his country's commitment to international efforts for

lasting solutions to the problem of refugees and displaced persons as well as its support for the enhanced role of UNHCR and increased international cooperation.

40. Mr. APPAVE (Australia), noting UNHCR's recent outlays resulting from the increasing number and complexity of emergencies involving coerced population movements, commended UNHCR's adherence to the strategy of prevention and emergency preparedness in dealing with specific displacement problems. He expressed appreciation for the Office's effectiveness in recent interventions.

41. In considering contemporary protection needs, a distinction needed to be made between refugees as defined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, for whom there was a well-established response mechanism, and persons who were not refugees by that definition. Their needs were qualitatively different and it would not be helpful to those who were subject to persecution to be placed in a wider category including those who were subject to a more generalized threat to physical safety. His delegation would not therefore wish to broaden the definition of refugee in order to deal with both groups under the 1951 Convention. Rather, establishing guidelines based on the common experience of UNHCR and member countries during recent humanitarian interventions would be a first step in ensuring consistency and equity of service and would provide UNHCR with a sense of how much was expected of it and at what point it should intervene.

42. Programme management and administration would become ever more important and his delegation recommended that UNHCR should explore new approaches. He welcomed the appointment of the Director of Inspection and Evaluation Services, who would be able to assist the international community in evaluating humanitarian interventions and discovering what approaches and techniques worked both in terms of international coordination and in the field.

43. His delegation urged UNHCR, following its conclusion of formal Memoranda of Understanding with WFP and UNDP, to continue to explore new avenues for cooperation with other agencies whose mandates coincided with UNHCR's protection mandate. It was particularly urgent to coordinate action on the so-called homeless issues, such as protection for the internally displaced and demining programmes.

44. It was most practical and appropriate that UNHCR should be the lead agency in certain humanitarian crises which might involve the Convention on refugees. But that role should be governed by the availability of resources and operational capacity and should not be undertaken at the expense of UNHCR's core protection role. He recommended that UNHCR should further develop its cooperation with DHA and build more effective relations with its NGO partners. Priority should be given to the implementation of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action, and he supported the PARINAC (Partnership in Action Process) recommendation for a world refugee day. Lastly, he paid tribute to the work of the High Commissioner and her staff in performing difficult and often dangerous tasks.

45. Mr. SLABY (Czech Republic), expressing gratitude for the dedication and courage of the UNHCR staff, hoped that a draft convention on the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel would soon be concluded.

46. The refugee problem should be examined in the broad context of human rights protection, since human rights violations were a major cause of the refugee problem. His delegation supported UNHCR's emphasis on preventive strategy and called upon the international community to monitor more actively those situations which might result in forced massive migration, and to use diplomatic channels or the threat of sanctions to help prevent such migration.

47. He called on States parties to the 1951 Convention to meet their obligations, in particular the principle of non-refoulement, violations of which brought into question the whole institution of asylum and constituted an infringement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

48. Despite recent successes, UNHCR could not relax its efforts to prevent, prepare for and seek solutions to problems of enforced displacement. In that connection, his delegation appreciated the work of all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in the former Yugoslavia. The Czech Republic had also been closely involved in relief work for Bosnia and Herzegovina from the start of the conflict, donating troops to UNPROFOR, direct aid to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, under UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration's special medical programme, medical care.

49. Temporary asylum seekers in the Czech Republic had the same status for the most part as Czech citizens. The Czech Republic was to convert to a final destination country where any person subject to persecution in his or her country would be able to seek asylum. Procedures had been modified to provide better service to genuine refugees as opposed to persons leaving their countries for other reasons. In view of the xenophobia and racism often provoked among the population of host countries by the abuse of asylum procedures and an influx of mainly economic migrants, he welcomed the activities aimed at combating racism and in particular the proclamation of the United Nations Year for Tolerance in 1995.

50. Lastly, deploring the tragic events in Rwanda, he said that the Czech Republic had participated fully in assisting that country, both in Security Council discussion and by sending humanitarian aid.

51. Mr. RATA (New Zealand) said that among the new demands placed on UNHCR during the previous year, the sheer scale of the Rwanda humanitarian emergency was unprecedented. Yet UNHCR's efficient response had allowed donor countries to feel confident in contributing significant amounts of financial and material aid.

52. The increasing complexity of operations showed that improved coordination not only of agencies involved in emergency operations, but also of political, financial, public relations and security concerns, would be necessary both to

avoid overburdening UNHCR and to allow the United Nations to speak publicly with one voice. Given the diversity of emergency situations leading to refugee movements recently, not only in Africa but in Europe and Central Asia, his delegation supported the proposal for a conference on refugee and migration matters.

53. New situations had led to the extension of UNHCR's protection mandate. His delegation welcomed the guidelines developed in relation to the former Yugoslavia on temporary protection for new and highly vulnerable groups of refugees such as the victims of the unacceptable practices of forced displacement or ethnic cleansing. While the country concerned should bear primary responsibility for the safety of internally displaced persons UNHCR, together with other humanitarian agencies, could play a valuable role in assisting them. There were also groups fleeing from armed conflict who were not covered by the 1951 Convention regarding the Status of Refugees, yet who required protection and assistance. His delegation welcomed UNHCR's work on guidelines for such groups.

54. As a resettlement country, New Zealand had been closely involved with UNHCR in the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese refugees. He looked forward to the successful conclusion of that programme at the end of 1995, and hoped an acceptable solution could be found to the problem of screened-out groups. In the broader resettlement field, his Government remained committed to offering annual resettlement places, particularly for groups such as women at risk and medical and emergency cases.

55. New Zealand extended its sympathies to the family of the UNHCR staff member who had been killed in Burundi earlier in the current year. In order to reach vulnerable groups, United Nations agencies, peace-keepers and other humanitarian organizations frequently had to operate on the front line. He looked forward to the adoption during the current session of the General Assembly of a convention which would be a major milestone in the protection of peace-keepers and humanitarian personnel, including contract and non-governmental personnel acting in support of United Nations operations. Such protection was particularly important for agencies such as UNHCR which often acted in close connection with peace-keeping operations. The convention would also provide for the possible extension of its provisions to other United Nations and agency personnel working in areas of exceptional risk, thus enabling protection to be provided to personnel who were not working in the area of a peace-keeping operation, and were unable to obtain protection from the host Government.

56. The UNHCR Executive Committee had stressed the importance of addressing root causes of human rights violations and refugee flows, and examining preventive measures; the absence of early preventive action gave rise to situations such as the Rwandan crisis, where situations deteriorated and lives were placed at risk.

57. Mrs. BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas) said that international migration had long been a dominant phenomenon in the world, and had become more pronounced in the post-cold-war era, leading to increased efforts by the international community

to address the challenge. Of significant note, in that regard, were the agreements reached at the recent International Conference on Population and Development, which placed migration issues within their proper context in relation to development, and provided a sound basis for action.

58. There had also been laudable efforts to improve the emergency preparedness and response capacity of UNHCR. The international community was continuing the search for preventive measures aimed at eliminating conditions and circumstances which led to refugee flows by strengthening human rights and humanitarian laws. UNHCR had also successfully continued to carry out one of its major policies, namely, promoting the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

59. As a result of the need to distinguish between refugees and economic migrants, there were large numbers of persons in need of international protection who were not considered to be refugees within the terms of international agreements. There were situations where temporary protection had to be given to those who might not qualify as refugees. Her country had for more than 30 years been experiencing a steady flow of undocumented migrants, largely because of political upheavals and economic deprivation within the region, as well as the geographically convenient location of the country which led migrants to use the Bahamas as a transit point en route to other States. In discharging its humanitarian duty to protect and assist those migrants, her country had seen its financial, social and welfare resources stretched beyond capacity. It had provided refuge in spite of the absence of either recognition or assistance from the international community. Some 40,000 Haitian migrants were estimated to be living in the Bahamas with no recognized immigration status. In comparison with the total population of some 250,000, that problem had had a significant impact on the country's socio-economic stability. Her Government had recently promulgated new legislation to facilitate the attainment of permanent residence status by migrants who had lived in the Bahamas for more than 10 years; however, faced with severely overstretched resources, her country no longer had the capacity to absorb additional migrants, even on a temporary basis. She trusted that with the return to Haiti of that State's democratically elected President, the large migratory movements of its citizens would end. The international community should pledge itself to assist Haiti on the road to a secure and stable future.

60. Long-term objectives, however laudable, did not address the immediate concerns of the Bahamas. She therefore called for the support of the international community to respond to the challenges faced by small countries such as her own, and hoped that, after the recent International Conference on Population and Development, the special needs and circumstances of developing countries would be borne in mind as they sought to grapple with large influxes of undocumented migrants. An attendant problem that could not be ignored was that of unscrupulous persons who sought to capitalize on the misfortune of migrants. Her country's meagre resources did not enable it to keep up with the activities of those unprincipled individuals.

61. The time was long overdue for the international community to focus specifically on the question of migrants. Whether the approach was to be

regional or global, it was necessary to undertake a comprehensive study and seize the opportunity to deal with a problem which was constantly increasing in complexity. Within the overall development concerns of countries, migration could no longer be treated as a peripheral issue. The search for durable solutions should take account of the need for greater responsiveness of the United Nations family of agencies in helping to resolve root causes, greater emphasis on intra-hemispheric collaboration, and international assistance for temporary accommodation and repatriation of economic as well as political refugees.

62. Her delegation wished to pay a tribute to the staff of UNHCR for their courage and determination under dangerous and volatile conditions. Attacks against them in the exercise of their humanitarian duties were unjustifiable. Greater efforts to guarantee their safety should be made by all parties concerned.

63. Mr. SCHATZER (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that, in a context where it was increasingly difficult to draw a clear line between refugee flows and other forms of displacement of persons requiring attention by the international community, his organization's broad migration mandate usefully complemented the responsibilities of UNHCR. Migration flows were generated by varying combinations of economic distress, ethnic violence, environmental degradation, political instability and armed conflict. A comprehensive approach to those root causes was leading to growing cooperation between IOM and UNHCR in the following areas: the world-wide incidence of irregular migration, often requiring joint and comprehensive analysis; the return of unsuccessful asylum-seekers and the repatriation of UNHCR-mandated refugees; capacity-building in the field of migration management, as well as in flow response on behalf of Governments struggling with new and sudden migration and refugee problems; orderly emigration and departure arrangements for needy nationals and for resettlement of refugees from countries of first asylum; and preventive information dissemination activities.

64. Africa was of particular concern to IOM. The uncertain situation in Rwanda and the neighbouring countries continued to frustrate initiatives for the large-scale return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Despite considerable difficulties, IOM had so far been able to assist more than 125,000 persons who had spontaneously decided to return to their home areas.

65. Victims of internal displacement were of growing concern to IOM in other parts of the world. One example was Mozambique, where programmes for reintegration of demobilized soldiers and their families and assistance to vulnerable internally displaced persons were IOM's responsibility. IOM had also used its resources to enable election observers to fulfil their task.

66. In the former Yugoslavia, IOM was having to prepare for another winter of warfare and humanitarian emergencies, and displacement of populations was continuing. Damage to health structures in the area was such that the IOM/UNHCR programme for medical evacuations was having to continue providing relief for patients in need of urgent care. Efforts for third-country resettlement, family

reunion activities for former detainees, and assistance to individuals wishing to return to their homes were continuing.

67. Afghanistan was another continuing refugee crisis area. The suffering of the population continued, although certain areas of the country seemed safe to some returning refugees. On the other hand, South-East Asia was an example of how a refugee situation could, over time, develop into an orderly migration process which continued to require international support, albeit of a different nature.

68. IOM had stressed the importance of an in-depth discussion of all matters related to migration, including its development aspects. The recent International Conference on Population and Development had produced an impressive consensus on migration matters, but the lack of a universally accepted policy document was testimony to the need for further deliberations. A number of regional initiatives were also needed; one example was the problem of refugees and forced displacement in the former Soviet Union. IOM was planning, for December 1994, a workshop on citizenship and related matters with the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States.

69. In its daily work, IOM relied heavily on the good offices and cooperation of other actors such as non-governmental organizations. Their partnership enabled IOM better to carry out its work, centred on the concern for individuals caught up in situations threatening their human rights, their sustainability, and often their lives.

70. The final document of the Cairo Conference had recognized that no person should be forced into leaving his home. Reality, however, still forced millions to flee violence or seek better conditions in other countries. Since the problems of migrants and refugees were closely linked, UNHCR and IOM often worked in complementary, cooperative ways. The problems facing the international community were such that such cooperative and innovative approaches needed to be continued, expanded, and further perfected.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.